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LABOUR MOVEMENTS
in
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by
ROBERT J. ALEXANDER

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by

Robert J. Alexander

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FROM MUTUAL ASSISTANCE TO TRADE UNIONS

The outstanding fact about Latin America to-day is the continent-wide feeling of unrest and revolt. This revolt is not a phenomenon which is confined to the New World by any means, but is rather part of the world-wide awakening of peoples in backward areas. It expresses itself in an exaggerated nationalism, and in social ferment within the frontiers of each country. It is in the light of this awakening that the labour movements of Latin America must be seen.

The labour movements of the Latin American countries have been profoundly influenced by the geographical, political and economic and social surroundings from which they have sprung. Perhaps the first point to be noticed by an European or North American is that the labour movements in each of the twenty republics of Latin America have developed independently and in their own particular manner. We are too apt to lump "Latin America" or "South America" together as one more or less unified though incoherent country. This is far from the truth. Each of the Latin American countries has a distinct personality, a distinct history, tradition and way of looking at things. The racial make-up, the stage of economic development, and many other factors have determined that the history of each of these countries—and certainly of their labour movements—will be distinctive.

Nevertheless, there have been certain lines of development characteristic of all the labour movements in Latin America. The progression from mutual benefit societies and anarcho-syndicalist societies of resistance, to a more or less organised and stable labour movement is a pattern which one can find in most of these nations. There have been some labour movements which have greatly influenced developments in neighbouring countries, principally the pioneer Argentine labour movement, whose influence has been felt throughout South America.

These movements started with mutual benefit societies, and the first anarcho-syndicalist "*uniones de resistencia*". After the First World War there was usually a struggle for influence between these older tendencies and new Socialist and Communist political ideologies. But during this early period the labour movement still remained a small-scale affair and included only a comparatively small proportion of the organisable workers. By the middle 'thirties, the anarcho-syndicalist influence had been supplanted by some brand of Marxist ideology. The last step, which has taken place in many of these countries during the last ten years, has been that of the vast and rapid expansion of the labour movement, accompanied by the rapid growth of one or another political party making a special appeal to the working class, often with the participation of this party in political power; the result has been the almost complete unionisation of industrial, transport and even commercial workers. There are variations in this pattern from country to country, and in any given nation it is sometimes difficult to say when one phase finished and another began. Some countries like Colombia and Venezuela had practically no anarcho-syndicalist phase; others like Uruguay have not yet reached the last part of the cycle. In Brazil, the near-Fascist corporate-state regime of Vargas has warped normal developments. Mexico went through the first phase and then as a result of the Revolution jumped into the last much

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earlier than most of these countries. But as a general pattern of development for the Latin American labour movements, that outlined here is a valid one.

The stage of economic development reached in each country has determined the speed at which the labour movements have grown. Industrial development in Latin America received its first great stimulus during World War One, and took giant strides during World War Two. During both wars they were cut off from their normal sources of supply for industrial products, Europe and the U.S., and were forced to provide for themselves many of the things which they had previously bought abroad. There is now growing up in many of these countries a considerable light industry and the beginnings of heavy industrial development.

Twenty or twenty-five years ago the typical "industrial" establishment was a small workshop with its "maestro" and his two or three assistants. Today in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico and some other countries there are factories, employing two or three thousand workers, principally in the textile trades. But, according to a questionnaire which this writer sent to most of the important industrial establishments of Chile, the typical industry in that country employs less than five hundred workers. With the exception of mining enterprises, there are only two or three Chilean factories which employ more than two thousand workers, and they are all textile plants. There are no more than half a dozen to a dozen establishments which employ between five hundred and two thousand workers. There are probably not more than two hundred industrial establishments in all of Chile which employ more than one hundred workers. The large plants are confined to textiles, railway workshops, foundries and small metallurgical works, chemical industries, breweries, one or two clothing manufacturers and printing establishments. Although there are bigger industries and more of them in Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, Chile is a good example of a comparatively industrialised Latin American country.

This late industrial development determined the type of labour movement which could exist. Until 1914, the only large groups of workers who could be classed as industrial were railway workers, maritime workers, miners and small groups of textile workers. The rest of the working class was made up of artisans rather than industrial labourers. For the artisan, the characteristic type of organisation was the mutual benefit society and not the trade union, since he was his own employer or worked in a shop where there were only one or two wage earners. His income was small and ceased immediately if he were taken ill or experienced some other misfortune, so it was necessary for him to band together with his fellows to try in a communal fashion to fend off the disastrous consequences which came from sickness and death. The result was the formation of mutual benefit societies. But these societies were a good deal more than just insurance groups. They usually had a headquarters which served as a social centre for members. Usually, too, the societies were organised on the basis of trades—the shoemakers, tailors, etc., organising in their individual groups—so that these mutual benefit organisations could serve when necessary as defenders of the interest of the trade. More often than not the societies served a cultural purpose too, having a library, and frequently having a school where the sons of the members—or the members themselves—could learn their alphabet. To this day the leading workers' society in Guayaquil, Ecuador, runs a night school which has some seventeen hundred pupils.

These early mutual benefit societies also included groups of workers who were not artisans. For instance, the first organisations of railwaymen in Chile and in Argentina and of textile workers in Peru were mutual benefit societies. Even the dock workers in Chile, who later became among the most militant trade unionists, first formed mutual benefit organisations.

The mutual benefit societies continue in existence in all of these countries to the present day. But their importance in most of the countries has waned with the growth of a strictly trade union movement. In many cases, the trade union movement developed under the wing of the mutual benefit societies, but went on to displace those societies as the centre of the labour movement. Generally the mutual benefit societies were much less political than the later unions, and have remained much more conservative in their outlook. In countries where industry is comparatively advanced the mutual benefit societies have a distinctly secondary position in the labour movement. In countries like Ecuador where there are even now only relatively small industries, the mutual benefit societies continue to play a leading part: the trade unions and mutual benefit societies are both affiliated to the central labour organisation, the *Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador*, and to its local branches. In Peru, though there is considerable industrial development, the labour movement has until the last couple of years been seriously hampered by a succession of dictatorships. As a result, the mutual benefit societies, which were considered less "dangerous", maintained a leading position in the labour movement because of the hostility of the government to strictly trade union organisation. With the advent of a more democratic regime in Peru, the position of the mutual benefit societies is rapidly becoming less important in the general labour picture. In Chile, on the other hand, there has for many years been a sharp distinction between purely mutual benefit societies and the trade unions. The former have their *Confederación Mutualista de Chile* which is quite distinct from the trade union *Confederación de Trabajadores de Chile*. Many Chilean unions, however, have mutual benefit features.

This early period is also marked by the preponderant influence of anarcho-syndicalism. The small artisan was an extreme individualist and he was a true believer in the axiom of Thomas Jefferson that "that government is best which governs least". Hence the philosophy of anarchism suited him better than any other. It was among the artisan class that the anarcho-syndicalists had their strongest supporters, and it is among this group today that there still exists in many countries a remnant of anarchist influence—among shoemakers, printing trades workers, and bakers, for instance.

The first purely trade union organisation came in the fields of transport and textiles where large groups of workers were grouped together under one employer. For instance, in Argentina and Chile, organisations of the engineers and firemen of the railways which date from the middle 1880's share with the printing trades workers and the bakers the honour of having the longest continuous history. In Cuba the first strong trade union organisations were the tobacco workers and the railway and port labourers. In a series of countries—Argentina, Chile, Cuba—the maritime workers took a leading part in a great wave of strikes which greeted the end of World War One. In Argentina the port workers tied up Buenos Aires for several weeks, and nearly brought down the government of the time. In Peru the maritime workers of the port of Callao organised in 1913 the first general movement in favour of the eight-hour day, and six years later the textile workers of the capital city of Lima led the way in another general strike which finally succeeded in achieving legislation providing for the eight-hour day.

In some countries the mining and oil workers were among the first to be organised. This was the case in Chile, where the nitrate workers were forming "mancomunales" as they called their early organisations, in the early 1900's when there were few other organised labour groups in the country. In Mexico the miners and the oil workers were among the earliest organised and strongest of the labour groups. In Venezuela, after the death of dictator Juan Vicente

Gómez, the petroleum workers were among the first labourers in the country to try to form trade unions. In Peru, the workers of the Cerro de Pasco Copper Mining Co. tried to organise as early as 1917, though they were not effectively organised until 1945.

With the growth of industry during the last few years, trade union organisation has spread further afield in all of these countries. In Chile, Peru, Argentina, Mexico and Cuba practically all of the urban workers who could be organised have joined unions in recent years. Even in such industries as the packing houses in Argentina and Uruguay, where the employers have always fought the establishment of unions with all the measures at their command, the workers have finally succeeded in organising.

The various governments have been reluctant to allow their own employees to organise. In almost all countries where there are labour codes the government workers are forbidden to organise under those codes. However, although these workers are generally forbidden to form "labour organisations" as defined under the labour laws of the various countries, and are not allowed to use the conciliation and arbitration procedures established under those codes, they are usually permitted to form regular "civil societies" with the same legal status as a charitable organisation or a ladies' sewing club which might seek incorporation. So for all practical purposes, the government workers in the various Latin countries have organisations, and in many instances they function as unions, though they do not have this legal status.

For instance, in Chile there have been a number of strikes of municipal employees and in most of the important cities of the country the municipal workers present lists of grievances and demands for wage increases about as often as do the unions in private industry.

Generally the law forbids public employees the right to strike. In most cases this prohibition is extended to cover the public service industries and the government is almost always given special powers to deal with walkouts in these vital industries.

One question which arises with regard to the organisation of government employees is the definition of a government employee. In countries where the railways and other public utilities are government-owned, the regulations concerning regular government workers are extended to include these categories. In Chile, for instance, the workers on the State Railways are forbidden to form "sindicatos" (trade unions) under the Labour Code, but the employees of the various retirement funds administered by the government and other such semi-autonomous government agencies are allowed union rights under the Code, on the plea that they are "semi-government employees". Though the railway workers are ostensibly not supposed to organise unions, their workers' federation is probably the strongest in the country and they are protected by the best labour legislation in the nation.

The agricultural workers remain the most important single group which is for the most part still outside the scope of organised labour. The organisation of agricultural labour touches the heart of the most critical problem of Latin America, the problem of land distribution. So far no country in Latin America, with the exception of Mexico, has had the courage to face the problem involved in the concentration of the ownership of the arable land in the hands of a small group of "oligarchs". This problem plagues Cuba, Chile, Brazil, Peru and Argentina. Even the all-powerful Perón government has not done anything to change the situation—in spite of considerable oratory which has been expended on the question by Sr Perón and his friends. Generally, the land worth owning in most of these countries is owned by a small group which

uses only so much of the land as is convenient, pays miserable wages to its farm workers, and lives as an absentee landlord class. This group is the most powerful influence in politics, in the armed forces, in the Church and in most other important fields and has prevented any large-scale attack on the landlord problem in any of the Latin American countries except Mexico, and perhaps Venezuela.

Because the organisation of agricultural workers would be a real threat to this landlord class, it has not been allowed by the governments of the Latin American countries until the present. For instance, an ostensibly democratic and liberal government of Bolivia arrests most of the leaders of the agricultural workers' unions as "subversive"; the extremely liberal Chilean President Pedro Aguirre Cerda issued a special order in 1939 prohibiting rural union organisation. However, slowly but surely the labour movement is moving into the countryside. In Chile during the last year the organisation of rural workers has been greatly encouraged by the revocation of President Aguirre Cerda's edict: in Peru the Aprista movement is working its way into the most isolated Indian villages with its gospel of social reform and education and with trade union organisation to boot. Even in backward Ecuador there is a strong agricultural labour organisation along the coast. In Argentina, one of the positive achievements of the Peronista regime has been to permit and actually stimulate the organisation of the workers on the sugar plantations in the province of Tucumán. Finally, during the last two years there has been a veritable rash of agricultural union organisation in Venezuela under the Revolutionary Government in power in that country. The spreading of trade union organisation among the agricultural workers on a really large scale in Latin America will bring a social revolution in almost all of these countries.

It is, of course, difficult to say just how many workers there actually are in these labour movements. The Latin American statistics-gathering machinery leaves much to be desired, and estimates are usually coloured by one or another bias. For instance, in Argentina we received estimates varying from two hundred and fifty thousand to one million for the strength of the Peronista *Confederación General del Trabajo*, and recent C G T publications have mentioned three million as the goal towards which the C G T membership is driving.

A reasonable estimate of the membership of the labour movements of Latin America, in comparison with the total population of each of the countries, is as follows:

Country	Union Membership	Country's Population
Argentina	500,000	16,000,000
Brazil	500,000	45,000,000
Mexico	1,000,000	20,000,000
Chile	350,000	5,000,000
Cuba	300,000	5,000,000
Peru	350,000	7,000,000
Venezuela	200,000	4,000,000
Colombia	150,000	10,000,000
Ecuador	75,000	3,000,000
Bolivia	70,000	3,500,000
Paraguay	25,000	1,000,000
Panama	25,000	750,000
Dominican Republic	25,000	2,000,000
Haiti	15,000	3,000,000
Guatemala	50,000	3,500,000
Nicaragua	25,000	1,000,000
Costa Rica	30,000	750,000
Uruguay	75,000	2,250,000

It can be said that for all practical purposes there is no labour movement in Salvador and Honduras because the dictatorships there will not permit one. The labour movement of the Dominican Republic is little more than a tool for the dictatorship of Generalissimo Rafael Leónidas Trujillo.

The relative strength of the Latin American labour movements can be judged when one notes that in the U S there are fifteen million trade unionists in a total population of something more than one hundred and forty million. Similar figures for Great Britain indicate an even higher percentage of trade unionists in the total.

FOREIGN INFLUENCES

Foreign influence and immigration have played an important part in the development and history of the Latin American labour groups. In Argentina the organised labour movement received its first great impulse from a visit to that country in the 1880s of the famous Italian anarchist, Enrico Malatesta, and several years later Malatesta, and another Italian anarchist, Pietro Gori, helped to found the first important central labour organisation there, the *Federación Obrera Regional Argentina*. The organisation of the unions of railway engineers and firemen in Argentina and Chile—"La Fraternidad" and "*Federación Santiago Watt*" (James Watt) respectively—was stimulated by a visiting delegation from the railway labour unions of the United States in 1885-6. In Bolivia one of the first moves towards labour and socialist organisation, which in 1913 brought about the formation of a Socialist Party and a number of trade unions in the city of Oruro, came after the importation into that country of a number of Spanish books on socialism, a series of propaganda publications of the Spanish Socialist Party. In Cuba and Puerto Rico the labour movement started through direct stimulation from Spain when those two countries were still Spanish colonies.

In Argentina the influence of immigration and of intellectual currents from Europe was particularly important in the early days of the labour movement. During the first thirty years of the twentieth century the working class of Argentina was largely made up of immigrants, principally from Spain and Italy. These immigrants brought with them the ideas of anarchism, syndicalism and socialism which were then current in their native lands, and transplanted them to the New World in the form of labour organisations and political parties. It is to this influence more than anything else that the absolute predominance of the ideas of anarchism, syndicalism, socialism and communism in the Argentine labour movement up until the Revolution of 1943 can be traced.

The same can be said, to a somewhat lesser degree, of Uruguay where the influence of Italian and Spanish immigrants was of fundamental importance in giving ideological direction to the labour movement; and in Brazil, where the Portuguese and Italian anarchist immigrants were to a large degree responsible for the anarcho-syndicalist influence which controlled the labour movement of that country until the advent of Getulio Vargas.

There have been frequent organisational contacts between the trade union and political labour movements of the New World and those of Europe, more so in the past than at the present time. The Socialist Party of Argentina was affiliated to the Second International from the foundation of the party. The anarcho-syndicalist organisations of the continent were among the founders of the International Workingmen's Association after the First World War. The Communists of Latin America have always maintained the closest relations

with the European and particularly the Russian Communist parties, and a number of the leaders of New World Communist Parties have spent some time being schooled in Moscow.

The central labour organisation of Brazil sent a delegate to the conference which reorganised the International Federation of Trade Unions after World War One, while the Argentine C G T, the Mexican *Confederación de Trabajadores de Mexico*, and the Chilean C T Ch were affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions in the days before the last war. A number of the Latin American central labour groups are at the present time affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions.

However, it is interesting to note that there is considerable discontent among the Latin American labour and socialist people with the attitude which their European comrades adopt towards them. There is a general feeling that the labour and socialist people of Europe don't give enough weight to the position of the Latin American labour movements. For instance, the leader of one of the New World socialist parties told this writer that his group was not affiliated to any international organisation because they were not in complete agreement with the principles of the groups now in existence—but that the most important reason why they were not affiliated was that the Europeans didn't want them, that the Europeans felt that the Latin American movements didn't count. This is a point of view which is held very widely in Latin America and is perhaps something of which the leaders of the European socialist and labour movements ought to be aware, and attempt to rectify. The labour and socialist organisations of the New World are of considerable importance in the world situation today and it is high time that this importance be recognised.

The Communists, of course, do not overlook their Latin American affiliates; they make sure that these are invited to and attend W F T U meetings and they build such figures as Vicente Lombardo Toledano into much more impressive figures than they really are.

The Latin American labour movements have a strong tradition of nationalism and anti-imperialism. The heyday of the anti-imperialist phase of the labour movements was the 1920s and early 1930s. At that time the incipient labour movements were the strongest opponents of foreign capitalist enterprises in the Latin American countries. For instance, the Nicaraguan Augusto Sandino—be he patriot or bandit—was strongly anti-imperialist, anti-U S and had strong connections with what little labour movement there was in Nicaragua and with the labour movements of Mexico and other neighbouring countries.

The labour organisations among the banana workers of the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica and Colombia were the strongest enemies of that firm. More recently, the attitude of the labour unions in the oil fields of Mexico had a great deal to do with the decision of the Mexican government in 1938 to expropriate the foreign-owned wells. Labour organisations in such industries as the Chilean copper and nitrate mines, the Uruguayan and Argentine meat packing houses, foreign-owned railroads in Chile, Peru and Uruguay have maintained an attitude of opposition to those companies not only as employer, but because they are at the same time foreign owned. There is still much talk about "foreign imperialism" among these workers though in at least a few cases, such as the nitrate and copper miners of Chile, the workers live in better circumstances with more pay and better living conditions than the vast majority of their fellow workers in that country.

This early anti-imperialism of the Latin American union groups did not prevent some cooperation between these labour movements and that of the

United States. The American Federation of Labour and the Mexican *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* jointly protested against General Pershing's invasion of Mexico in 1916, and were at least in part responsible for the withdrawal of that "punitive expedition". Later, at the end of 1917, President Gompers of the A F L went to Cuba personally to persuade some American railwaymen imported there to break a Cuban railway workers' strike to return home. From 1917 until the early 1930s there existed a Pan American Federation of Labour, the most important members of which were the A F L and the Mexican C R O M.

It was in the early period that the Aprista movement gained continent-wide, and perhaps world-wide, fame with its theory that the incipient working class must join with the native capitalist class and the peasantry to fight the imperialists and their allies, the big landowners. And the theme of "national unity" has continued down to the present day, appropriated when it was convenient by the Communists—though they were the staunchest opponents of the doctrine when Haya de la Torre and other Apristas first enunciated it in 1924–28. This idea that the native promoters of industry and the workers both had a common enemy in the great foreign companies which operated within the boundaries of the Latin American countries has led to a kind of class collaboration which has been endorsed by all but the most extreme revolutionaries in Latin America's labour movements. The anarcho-syndicalists are probably the only ones who have not approved of the doctrine. The outstanding example of this kind of class collaboration is the industry-labour pact signed in Mexico in 1945, providing for co-operation between the leading industrialists and the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México*, then the leading labour organisation in the country. It was designed to stimulate the further industrialisation of the country and to avoid labour conflicts which might be prejudicial to the development of native-owned Mexican industry.

In recent years this policy of class collaboration has fitted in very well with the international Communist slogan of National Unity, and particularly with the Communist attempts to line up everyone possible against the United States and Great Britain. Since the principal foreign enterprises in the Latin countries are British and American, the Communists, through the labour organisations which they controlled, could hit more or less directly at the U S and Britain themselves by adopting this class collaboration policy aimed against all big foreign corporations.

There has been a change in the anti-imperialist position of many of the Socialist and allied organisations in Latin America in recent years. Although they have not dropped their opposition to imperialism, they have tended to soft-pedal the attacks against the United States and Britain. There are various reasons for this. First of all, these countries are feeling their own strength, and though they may walk with considerable caution in front of the governments of the U S and Britain, they no longer have the exaggerated fear and respect which they once had for the foreign corporations working within their frontiers. The Government of Chile, for instance, doesn't hesitate to force the foreign-owned mining companies there to give their workers a wage raise. Nor does it hesitate to put discriminatory taxation on the big foreign-owned mining companies—both notions which twenty-five years ago would probably have been unthinkable.

The Socialists have also come to realise that if these countries are to be industrialised within any reasonable space of time, it will be necessary to have foreign capital and that this capital must come principally from the United States and perhaps from Britain. Therefore, they have turned their attention not to an open onslaught on all foreign capital within their nations' frontiers,

but rather towards evolving methods by which this capital can enter and develop the industries needed there, gaining a reasonable profit, but not coming to dominate the countries politically and economically.

In the third place, there has been a fundamental change in the policy of the United States with regard to the Latin American countries since the 1920s. In the time of Theodore Roosevelt, who counselled his friends to "tread lightly and carry a big stick", and of his immediate successors, the Colossus of the North thought nothing of sending marines or army troops to "settle" a strike or thwart a revolution in any of the Central American countries and particularly those which rim the Caribbean. During the first three decades of the present century this threat of outright military and political intervention hung heavy over the heads of the Latin American countries.

With the advent of the Good Neighbour policy of Theodore's distant cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt, this situation changed fundamentally. The United States no longer sends troops into the Latin American countries to clean up their internal squabbles. In fact the policy of the United States has been criticised in recent years for abstaining too much from interference in the affairs of these countries, and therefore permitting the existence of dictatorships such as those of Benavides and Prado in Peru. This change in policy, marked also by such minor but significant things as changing the name of relations among the American countries from "Pan American" to "Inter American", and by consultations among all of the American republics upon the occasion of any untoward events in any one of them, has had a profound effect on the labour and socialist movements of these countries.

Finally, as one of the leaders of the Aprista movement of Peru said to this writer, in the 1920s when the A P R A launched its great anti-American-imperialism campaigns, the chief menace to the welfare and security of the countries of Latin America was the United States. Since that time, there has arisen a greater menace, that of Totalitarianism, in all of its various manifestations.

The result of these events has been that the Socialist and allied groups in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Cuba, Peru, Brazil and to a lesser extent in Ecuador and Venezuela have drifted away from their extremely belligerent attitude towards the U S and now have taken up a more friendly position. In the case of the Panamanian Socialist party, which suffers from the racial distinctions which unfortunately many Americans have brought with them to the Canal Zone, the attitude towards the U S and American Imperialism hasn't been modified quite so much. Nor has it among certain Colombian groups, who still are galled by the coup which Theodore engineered with his Big Stick in Panama more than a generation ago.

The course of the Communists' attitude towards imperialism and American imperialism in particular has varied more in accordance with the changes in the foreign policy of Russia and the consequent line of the Comintern than with any developments in the New World. Thus Roosevelt was an "imperialist war-monger" from 1939–41, the Communists welcomed the establishment of United States military bases in Latin countries from 1941–5, and now the U S has replaced the Nazis in the Communist chamber of horrors.

POLITICAL INFLUENCES IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENTS

One cannot separate the labour movements of Latin America from the politics of those countries. Since its inception the trade union movement has been highly political and remains so to this day. The political colours of the labour movements of different countries vary, and within a single country the

shade differs from time to time, but there is no labour movement in Latin America which can truly be called apolitical in the sense of the American labour movement.

THE ANARCHISTS

In the early years of this century the predominant political thinkers in the labour movement were the "anti-political" anarchists. They controlled the pioneer labour organisations of Argentina for the decade from 1901 to 1911 almost without competition, and they continued to be a force there for many years. At the same time the labour groups of Uruguay, Peru, Chile and Mexico were deeply influenced by the followers of Bakunin and Malatesta. There was scarcely a country in the continent that didn't have its anarchist publications.

The labour movement in those days took the form of spontaneous, sporadic, sometimes bloody revolts of the workers, rather than a highly organised, consistent labour movement. The form of organisation was the *Sociedad de Resistencia* or Resistance Society, "which had no permanent officers, in which everyone was free to speak his piece though it might take all night to conduct a meeting, in which there was little or no preparation for strike action—no strike fund and no strike delegates." Often a union which would appear as a result of strike action would disappear soon afterwards. One of the hottest issues during this anarchist phase was the question whether the unions should have paid officials. Most of the anarchist-controlled organisations, even the central labour organisation itself with thousands of members, did not have any full-time or even part-time paid officials. The union activities were all conducted after working hours and on weekends. This, of course, did not lend strength to the organisations.

The Governments of all of these countries were brutal in combatting the anarchists and the labour movements which they controlled. The great massacre of nitrate workers in Iquique in 1907 when hundreds were killed is still remembered by the workers of Chile. The old Argentine anarchist leaders who remember the way they were jailed, held incommunicado without food and water, tortured, and generally persecuted by the Governments of that country in the early years of the present century do not feel that the Peronista government is profoundly different in this sense from its predecessors. The Mexican textile strikes of the same period, inspired and led by the anarchist brothers, Flores Magón, were equally brutally suppressed by the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz which governed that country in the early 1900s.

In spite of their anti-political philosophy, the anarchists in their heyday were as political in their control of the unions as the Marxists ever were. For instance, the complete unification of the Argentine movement was thwarted several times by the insistence of the anarchist leaders that the unified trade union federation include in its declaration of principles a statement in favour of anarcho-communism. And the anarchists in most of these countries had organised "societies" which acted within the unions in roughly the same way which the political parties were to do later. That this was true is indicated by a meeting of the *Confederación General de Trabajadores*, the present-day anarcho-syndicalist organisation in Chile which this writer attended, where almost a whole morning was devoted to a discussion of the part which the strictly anarchist elements should play in that labour movement.

THE SYNDICALISTS

A syndicalist group also developed as a deviation from this anarchist trend. The syndicalists, who took their thinking and organisation from the

pre-1914 *Confédération Générale du Travail* in France, came as near to being an apolitical group as any that has appeared on the stage of the Latin American labour movement. Their stronghold was also in the Argentine, where first the so-called *Federación Obrera Regional Argentina* of the Ninth Congress and later its successor, the *Unión Sindical Argentina*, were relatively strong organisations. This syndicalist group evolved out of the left-wing of the Socialist trade unionists and the more moderate wing of the anarchists, both of which were tired of the constant bickering between the anarchists and socialists in the unions and aspired to found a labour movement which would be free from the meddling of both of these political groups. The F O R A of the Ninth Congress was founded in 1915 when a group split away from the orthodox anarchist *Federación Obrera Regional Argentina* (henceforth called 'of the Fifth Congress') because they objected to pledging allegiance to anarchist communism. It was for seven or eight years the principal labour organisation in the country, and in 1922 was converted into the *Unión Sindical Argentina* or U S A which continued to be a force down to the advent of Perón, though a definitely secondary force. Similar groups appeared in Uruguay, Chile and one or two other countries.

THE SOCIALISTS

In the early days of this century the chief rivals of the anarchists in the labour movements of Latin America were the Socialists. The Socialist Party of Argentina is the oldest organisation of its kind in South America, dating from 1896, but even before this, as far back as the 1870s, there were conflicts between the followers of Bakunin and the followers of Marx in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil.

In Argentina the first central labour organisation, the *Federación Obrera de la República Argentina*, was founded by the Socialists in 1899, but was taken over and renamed the *Federación Obrera Regional Argentina* by the anarchists in 1901. During the next two decades the Socialists controlled successively the *Unión General de Trabajadores* from 1902-5, the *Confederación Obrera Regional Argentina* from 1909 (though here they lost control to the syndicalists), the *Confederación Obrera Argentina* from 1926-30 and the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* from 1903 until 1943. With the rise of Perón, the Socialists lost control of the labour movement almost completely and now are left only with a small group of relatively ineffectual unions. In their time, the C O A and the C G T under Socialist control were the majority groups in the country's labour movement.

In Chile first the *Partido Democrático*, which was a mildly socialist group with some contact with the Second International, and then the *Partido Socialista Obrero* were the chief rivals of the anarchists in the labour movement. In Peru the socialist groups developed rather late, after the first World War, and never had much influence except among the oil workers of the northern part of the country. In Mexico groups which called themselves Socialist arose during the Mexican Revolution, while in some other countries there were socialist orientated groups.

After the First World War some of these Socialist parties, notably those of Chile and Uruguay, went over to the Communist International and it was some years before new Socialist organisations arose. However, during the last fifteen years Socialist groups have been founded in Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Cuba and most recently in Brazil. In Uruguay, Chile, Ecuador, Brazil, Panama and Cuba these parties have considerable force in the labour movement though only in Ecuador do they control the majority of the workers' economic organisations.

There has been some contact among these various socialist groups. As early as 1919 there was held an All American Socialist Congress in Buenos Aires; and in 1940 and 1946 conferences were held in which the Socialist and Aprista groups cooperated. Another such conference is planned for the near future.

THE COMMUNISTS

The Communists have been active in the labour movement since the First World War. Communist parties were formed relatively early in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay and Brazil. In Argentina the party developed from a left-wing split-off from the Socialist Party. In Uruguay and Chile the Socialist Party itself went over to the Comintern. In Brazil the Communist party was founded by a group of ex-anarchists.

By 1930 there were Communist groups or parties in most of the Latin American countries and in 1929 two congresses were held, one of labour organisations controlled by the Communists, and the other of the Communist parties themselves, in Montevideo and Buenos Aires respectively.

In the 1920s the only labour organisations of any importance which the Communists controlled or influenced very much were those of Chile, where they controlled the *Federación Obrera de Chile*, the principal labour group of the time, Cuba, where in the late 1920s they got control of the *Confederación Nacional de Obreros de Cuba*, and Brazil where they disputed control of the unions with the anarchists. In Mexico the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* under Luis Morones for some time played coyly with the Profintern, but never actually affiliated to this Red International of Trade Unions. During the famous Third Period of the Comintern, when the Communists all over the world adopted an extremely sectarian position, they founded a series of more or less fictitious central labour organisations in most of the Latin American countries where they had any influence at all.

However, it was in the late 1930s and the 1940s, with the great rise in the power of the labour movements themselves, and with the control which they exercised over the *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina* (the CTAL), that the Communists really became the important factor they now are. At the present time they control majority groups in the labour movements of Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Panama, Uruguay; are elements of importance in Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil and Paraguay. They have lost practically all of their influence in Argentina, where in 1943 before the rise of the Peronistas they were fighting with the Socialists for supremacy in that country's labour movement; and in Mexico where they had considerable force in the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM) which was for some time the majority labour group, but which now has been reduced to one of seven or eight central labour groups with more or less equal power. The Communists have lost ground since 1945 in other countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru and Cuba, principally due to the rapid rise of other political groups, the *Acción Democrática* in Venezuela, the Socialists in Ecuador and the Apristas in Peru.

Nevertheless, the Communists still maintain a more or less fictitious front as the controlling element in the labour movement of Latin America as a whole, through their domination of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina*. Although the President of this organisation, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, claims not to be a Communist, he has faithfully followed the Comintern's rapid changes of policy for ten or a dozen years, and it is certain that a large majority of the Executive Council of the CTAL are

Communists, though many of them represent no one in the labour movements of their respective countries. Thus the Argentine is represented in the council of the CTAL by Rubén Iscaro and Francisco Perez Leiros, the first a Communist and the second a Socialist, neither of whom are now members of labour organisations in their own country and are certainly not leaders of any unions.

The Peruvian representative on the CTAL is Communist Juan P. Luna, who now holds no office in a trade union and is back to driving his taxi cab. In the case of Ecuador, the labour organisation of that country is represented in the CTAL by Pedro Saad, a Communist, though the Communists have lost control of that central labour organisation. The CTAL, although it began in 1938 as a real central organisation of Latin American labour, with practically all of the important union organisations of the continent represented, is now reduced to little more than a sounding board for Communist oratory and high-sounding pronunciamientos.

There are some elements opposed to the Communists who hope to be able to capture control of and reform that organisation. Their possibilities of success seem small since the Communists have for some time ably manipulated the delegates of such comparatively insignificant labour organisations as those of the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua, where there are dictatorships which don't allow much real labour organisation.

THE PERONISTAS

In recent years a group of parties which we can for convenience call "Peronistas" have had considerable influence in the labour movements of Latin America. The three principal parties in this class are the *Partido Peronista* of President Perón in Argentina, the *Partido Trabalhista* of ex-president Vargas in Brazil, and the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* in Bolivia. It is a characteristic of each of these parties that their wide working class support represents a more or less blind response from elements in the population which have until recently been unorganised or only scantily organised. Perón's real power is based on the hundreds of thousands of workers whom he has attracted to the labour movement for the first time and on the undoubted gains which he obtained during his period as Secretary of Labour for such groups of workers as those in the packing houses and the sugar plantations of northern Argentina.

Vargas' party in Brazil and the labour unions which it controls, are made up to a large degree of elements who were not in the labour movement before Vargas' destruction of the free labour movement in the middle 'thirties, and who believe sincerely but mistakenly that the labour movement in Brazil began with Getulio Vargas. Finally, in Bolivia the most powerful element in the working class support of the MNR is the miners' group, which was never effectively organised before the MNR-dominated government of Col. Villarroel (1943-6) and which did win some improvements and changes during that regime, and which now believes that the Bolivian trade union movement began with Col. Villarroel.

It is characteristic of these parties that they are more in the fascist current than anything else, though this writer believes it is unrealistic merely to label them "fascist". Like the Aprista group of parties which have many affinities with the Socialist parties, the Peronista group of parties, which have affinities with the Fascists, are an eminently American group of organisations, arising from essentially American conditions, and the arousing of the masses to political, economic and social activities. They cannot be explained away, destroyed or even effectively combatted if one confines oneself to labelling them fascist.

There are certainly fascist overtones in the Peronista regime—one need but mention the ex-adviser of Primo de Rivera and friend of Mussolini, the Spanish economist José Figuerola; the son of a prominent Nazi and private secretary to Perón, Sr Freude; and the pro-German ex-chief of Perón's Federal Police Force, Gen. Filomeno Velasco, to realise the fascist-minded nature of the Peronistas and their regime. But it is not simply that, and unlike the fascist regimes of Europe which were more movements of desperation than of hope, there is a strong element of hope and first awakening which gives great motive power to these movements, particularly those of Perón and the M N R.

THE APRISTAS

Another political force in the labour movements which is distinctly American and from this writer's point of view more hopeful, is that group of parties which we shall call Aprista. They include the *Partido del Pueblo*, or Aprista Party of Peru; the *Partido Febrerista* of Paraguay, the *Partido Accion Democrática* of Venezuela, and the *Partido Auténtico* of Cuba. Each of these movements is a democratic political force, with a socialist orientation, but which rejects the idea of blindly applying Marxism to the countries of America. These parties consciously try to ally the working class, the middle class and the agrarian working class in a united front against the semi-feudal landowning oligarchy which has so long controlled their respective countries, and to bring about in those countries a social transformation which will raise the standard of living and level out some of the vast inequalities which exist in those nations.

Each of these parties has wide working class support and in Peru and Venezuela they have almost unquestioned hegemony over the labour movement, while in Paraguay and Cuba they are one of the two most important elements. These parties are strong supporters of political democracy and seek, as far as possible, to bring about basic social transformations through democratic processes. The Aprista parties, too, represent a phase of this blind social awakening which has already been mentioned, but in these cases this awakening is being directed into much saner and happier channels. They have aroused in the masses of their respective countries profound hopes and one can only wish that these hopes will not be betrayed.

CATHOLIC INFLUENCES

Finally, mention should be made of Catholic influences in the labour movements of Latin America. Although it cannot be labelled exactly, "political" Catholic influence is certainly of the same genre as that of the Socialists, Communists and Peronistas.

The Catholic Church's intervention in the labour movement has spread over a considerable period of time. "Círculos Obreros" or "Workers' Circles" were organised in many countries during the early years of the present century and even before. These were half mutual benefit societies, half religious organisations. The actual launching of Catholic trade unions is of more recent origin. In Brazil the Confederation of Catholic Workers was launched in 1932, but was more or less snuffed out by the corporative trade union set-up established by Vargas in the middle 'thirties, and Catholic activity in that country returned to the "Círculo Obrero" stage.

In Argentina there has been a very significant trade union movement among women white collar workers led by Monseñor De Andrea, which has gained considerable benefits for its members and has perhaps twenty-five to thirty thousand workers organised. There is another more general Catholic trade union movement in Argentina, but it has been more or less obliterated

by the rise of Peronismo. In Chile from time to time the Church or elements of the Church have tried to organise trade union movements, but without much success. There exists today an avowedly Catholic labour group, the *Federación Obrera de Chile*, which is very poor materially and spiritually. More interesting in Chile is the Catholic Social political party, the *Falange Nacional* (founded some years before the Spanish Falange of Franco and having nothing at all to do with that organisation), which is led by a brilliant group of young intellectuals and has some support among the working class, principally in unions which are under the general control of the Communists.

In Ecuador there is a Catholic labour movement of some importance headed by the *Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Católicos* and the *Confederación Ecuatoriano de Obreros Católicos*. This group has perhaps fifteen to twenty per cent. of the organised labour groups of the country within its ranks.

In Colombia there is a new and fast-growing Catholic labour movement, headed by the *Unión de Trabajadores Colombianos* and directed and inspired by the Jesuits. It dates only from 1946, but has acquired proportions which will soon make it a real challenge to the Communist and Liberal controlled *Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia*. Those directing this organisation are exceedingly intelligent and the movement has the goodwill of a number of employer groups which are opposed to the "Red" CTC and hope that this new organisation will be less militant and perhaps more malleable by the employers. On the other hand, the continued control of the CTC which the Communists exercise, due to a "deal" with one faction of the Liberal party, gives the Catholic UTC a very good talking point which the Catholics are nothing loathe to use. This is certainly the Catholic labour movement in Latin America with most promise for the future.

Finally, mention should be made of the *Confederación de Trabajadores "Rerum Novarum"* of Costa Rica, which is one of the oldest of the American Catholic labour groups. It is under the direction of Padre Nuñez, an able and intelligent Catholic priest of considerable prestige, and there are a number of other clergymen, many of them comparatively young, who are interested in this movement. It represents a powerful balance to the completely Communist-controlled *Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica*.

EFFECTS OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Opinion is no doubt divided on whether or not the extreme political control of the labour movements of Latin America has been a good thing for those movements and for the workers themselves. It is certainly true that the help of friendly governments has been a crucial factor in the rapid growth of the labour movements of Argentina, Chile, Peru, Venezuela and Cuba in the last few years. The political consciousness of the labour movements of various of these countries has also been decisive in gaining advanced codes of labour legislation, and in resolving immediate labour conflicts in favour of the workers. Also it might be noted that the existence of strong labour movements in Peru and Venezuela for instance, is doing much to defend the political democracy which those countries are enjoying at the moment.

But there are serious disabilities involved in the extremely political nature of the Latin American labour movements. First of all, there is the tendency for them to become nothing more than the organs of the government. This trend is accentuated in Argentina, where the CGT has become so much the creature of the Perón government that it is even aiding the pro-Franco policy of the Perón Government by sending a message of greeting to the Spanish dictator upon the occasion of the visit of Señora de Perón to Spain. The same

trend could be noted in Chile during the period in which the Communists were in the Government, early in 1947.

In all of the countries where the party which has a majority in the labour movement is in power, or where that party is cooperating with the Government, the labour movement's freedom of action is seriously hampered, and the relations between employers and workers tend to become confused with what is good for the political future of the Government. This was true in Peru, for instance, when the Communists were the majority group in the labour movement and were cooperating with the Prado dictatorship; it has perhaps been true in Cuba under the Auténtico regime and in Venezuela under the Accion Democrática Government.

Another great inconvenience has been revealed in recent months in Colombia. There the labour movement was controlled by the Liberal Party which had been in the government during sixteen years, and under whose wing the movement had grown, and the Communist Party. In the presidential election of 1946 the Liberals lost control of the Government, and in the Congressional elections of 1947 the Communists were virtually eliminated from the national political scene, with the result that the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia* is going through a period of decline and serious internal crisis.

Finally, the danger of splitting along political lines is a very real one. For instance, in a series of countries—Chile, Guatemala, Uruguay, Peru, Colombia—there have from time to time been splits not over any questions concerning the labour organisations themselves, but rather as a result of differences of opinion over political issues or attempts by one or another political group to seize complete control of the unions, or to upset a rival group which had that control. But it is worth noting that the labour leaders of Latin America with whom this writer has talked—some four hundred in all—have been all but unanimous in saying that though the other fellow may take political considerations into account when dealing with strictly union problems he, the speaker, never did this. This statement was made whether or not the speaker was willing to admit that he was a member of a political party—and most of them were members of one or another.

CONTINENTAL FEDERATIONS

At various times during the last forty years there have been more or less successful attempts to form a central organisation covering unions throughout the Latin American continent. Before the First World War there were frequent contacts among the anarcho-syndicalist movements and a loose organisation was established among them.

In 1916-17 the Pan American Federation of Labour came into existence. At that time the United States had sent General Pershing on a "punitive expedition" to chase Pancho Villa back into Mexico and "castigate" him for alleged trespasses on United States territory. At about the same time, President Wilson sent American troops to Vera Cruz. The Mexican labour organisations protested vigorously against these policies and asked for aid in combatting them from the American Federation of Labour. Contact was made between the two labour groups and a founding meeting of the Pan American Federation of Labour was held early in 1917 in Texas. The headquarters of the P A F L were established in Washington, and Carlos Loviera, a Cuban long resident in the United States, was put in charge of its activities.

Near the end of 1917 as a result of the P A F L's and Samuel Gompers' personal intervention in the Camaguey railway strike, the P A F L won adherents in Cuba. During the next ten years labour organisations in ten or a dozen different countries, principally around the rim of the Caribbean, affiliated to the Pan American Federation of Labour. But the American Federation of Labour and the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* of Mexico remained the two principal organisations within the Federation. Santiago Iglesias, secretary of the Free Federation of Labour of Puerto Rico (affiliated to the American Federation of Labour) was for many years the Secretary of the P A F L and its chief figure.

Controversy has not ceased to rage around the Pan American Federation of Labour. Communists and other leftists accused the Pan American Federation of Labour of being a tool of the A F L which, according to the Communists, was playing the game of the United States State Department in relation to the Latin American countries. Charges were also made that some members of the P A F L, such as the Venezuelan member, represented fictitious organisations, sponsored by the various Latin American dictatorships.

On the other hand, the supporters of the Pan American Federation maintain that it served a very useful purpose in bringing together many of the principal labour organisations of the continent at that time. They also point to various instances in which the P A F L protested vigorously against Dollar Diplomacy and the tyrannies of local dictators. For instance, the Cuban ex-members of the P A F L cite various instances when that organisation intervened to defend its Cuban affiliates against the persecutions of the Machado Dictatorship. In the case of Mexico, too, the P A F L defended the Mexican regime when it was under serious fire from elements in the United States.

In sum, it can probably be said that the record of the Pan American Federation of Labour though perhaps not spotless, was fairly satisfactory. It was the first serious attempt to bring together some of the principal Labour organisations of the continent into a central body. It served a useful purpose in protesting against actions of the United States Government at a time when that Government had never heard of a Good Neighbour Policy. It was not a radical organisation, but it cannot justly be said that it was a reactionary one.

In 1929 a conference of all of the Communist trade union organisations of Latin America was held at Montevideo and the *Confederación Sindical de America Latina* was formed. Most of the unions belonging to this confederation were fictitious or nearly so. This was during the famous "Third Period" of the Comintern when it was Communist policy to launch their own central trade union organisations even though they had little or no trade union strength. By 1929 even the once-powerful organisations which were affiliated to the C S A L were much reduced in membership and strength, for instance, the *Federación Obrera de Chile* and the *Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba*, which were suffering severely from the dictatorships of Carlos Ibañez and Gerardo Machado respectively. This Communist confederation continued until the middle thirties when it lapsed at the time of the "Popular Front" policy of the Comintern. So far as this writer knows no further congress of the organisation was held after the 1929 meeting.

The anarcho-syndicalist organisations of the continent have been represented on the *Asociación Continental Americana de Trabajadores* since a few years after the First World War. However, the A C A T never was of first rate importance and since 1919 the numerical strength and relative importance of the anarcho-syndicalist trade unions has been steadily declining.

There is no organisation uniting the various national Catholic trade union movements, and so far as this writer knows, none of the American Catholic trade union groups was ever affiliated to the Christian Federation of Workers between the wars. There have been several "Seminars" of the Catholic Social Action, where Catholic labour leaders have been present from most of the American countries, including the United States and Canada. There has also been at least one conference—in Montevideo in 1946—of the Catholic Social political parties of the western hemisphere, at which several of the Catholic trade union groups were also represented.

THE CONFEDERACIÓN DE TRABAJADORES DE AMERICA LATINA

The most recent central labour organisation among the Latin American trade union groups is the *Confederación de Trabajadores de America Latina*, the famous CTAL. The CTAL was founded in a well publicised congress held in Mexico in the summer of 1938. This Congress was attended by delegates from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Cuba and Mexico, as well as fraternal representatives from the American CIO (John L. Lewis), the French *Confédération Générale du Travail* (Leon Jouhaux), the International Federation of Trade Unions, the Indian trade unions and the International Labour Organisation. At the time of its foundation the CTAL was a truly representative organisation, having within its ranks practically all of the important national labour organisations in Latin America. However, as the years passed, the CTAL came more and more under Communist influence. This was to a very great degree due to the influence of the president of the CTAL, Vicente Lombardo Toledano.

Lombardo Toledano was until 1940 secretary-general of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Mexico*, and was at that time forced out, reportedly because he was considered by the incoming Avila Camacho government as too friendly to the Communists. However, Lombardo continued as president of the CTAL, and made of that organisation his vehicle. He has followed the Communist line through all of its twistings and turnings during the last ten years. Though it is likely that he is not a member of the Communist Party, he had certainly worked much more closely with the Communists in the CTAL than with their opponents.

Communist influence in the CTAL also increased greatly during the war because they made giant strides in the separate Latin American labour movements. The Communists were rapidly gaining force in the Argentine labour movement before the military dictatorship was established in 1943. They were by 1943 or 1944 the majority group in the Chilean labour movement; they and their sympathisers were of great importance in the Mexican labour movement; they dominated the Cuban CTC more or less completely; they dominated the Colombian CTC with facility though actually a small minority in that organisation; they dominated the Peruvian CTP so long as the dictatorship was in power in that country, and they worked with it. As a result of all this, the Communists gained representation from these various national organisations on the council of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de America Latina*.

Finally, Communist influence in the CTAL has been strengthened by the fact that some of the principal non-Communist or anti-Communist organisations in the *Confederación* have either withdrawn or have become inactive in the CTAL. Thus after the split in the Chilean labour movement, the CTC controlled by Bernardo Ibañez withdrew from the CTAL; the Peruvian CTP suspended, though did not break entirely, its relations with the CTAL after the Apristas got control of the Peruvian national organisation;

the CTM in Mexico was divided several times, leaving little more than a Communist-controlled rump in the organisation which still adhered to the CTAL.

All of these factors led to the more or less complete capture of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de America Latina* by the Communists. To counter this tendency a fairly well-organised movement has grown up throughout Latin America in opposition to the Communists. A group of independent organisations of various political tendencies exists in Uruguay. There were splits in the Chilean, Cuban and Colombian central labour groups—the last of these being patched up, but somewhat precariously so. And within the CTAL the control of the Peruvian *Confederación de Trabajadores del Peru* changed from the Communists to the Apristas, the *Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador* was captured by the Socialists, while in Venezuela, though there is no Confederation, the vast majority of the unions are under anti-Communist influence.

Observing these developments, and perhaps aiding them in some degree, has been the American Federation of Labour. The AFL's policy has been that of avowedly fighting whatever Communist influence there is in the labour movements to the South, and fighting the CTAL in particular as a Communist-controlled organisation. No doubt in part the American Federation of Labour's dislike of the CTAL stems from the close relations which the *Confederación* has had in the past with the CIO, the AFL's domestic rival.

The American Federation apparently favours the foundation of a new confederation which would rival the CTAL. They argue correctly that it is no longer true that the Communists have a majority of the labour organisations of Latin America under their control. Working from this premise, they say that it is logical to organise a new confederation on the basis of the anti-Communist majority in the unions of the continent. There has been some talk of making the new organisation Inter-American, as was the Pan American Federation of Labour, rather than strictly Latin American.

However, there is a strong desire among the anti-Communist union leaders of Latin America to try to conquer the CTAL, oust Lombardo Toledano and take over the organisation. The supporters of this tactic point out that the *Confederación de Trabajadores de America Latina* has established a reputation, that its representatives are accepted as the spokesmen for Latin American labour, and that it is more advantageous to capture a going concern than to create a new one. And they point out that it is distinctly possible that such a conquest could be achieved. They cite the fact that Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, perhaps a majority of Cuba, as well as one or two of the smaller groups are now in the anti-Communist camp and that if they work in a concerted, organised manner they might well be able to dislodge the Communists. If this proves impossible, these elements believe it will then be time enough to discuss the formation of a new confederation.

LATIN AMERICA LABOUR CODES

Both a cause and a result of the rapid growth of the labour movements of Latin American countries during the last dozen years or so has been the creation of Labour Codes in almost all of these nations. Even in cases where there is no avowed Labour Code, the labour legislation of each of these countries is fairly complete. In fact labour legislation is becoming so important in the structure of Latin American law that in some countries it is now treated as a separate division of the law, distinct from criminal law and civil law.

The Codes have two purposes: they are intended to guarantee to the workers certain rights of organisation and collective bargaining, and they are intended to give the Government control not only over the collective bargaining procedures, but over the organisations themselves.

Before the institution of codes of labour law in most of these countries, the position of the workers was very poor. There still persists in Spanish America the subconscious belief that those who work with their hands are beyond the pale, a psychological hangover from the days of slavery and the impressment of the Indians by the Conquistadores. In addition there was the experience, not confined to Latin America, that nascent industrialism produces deplorable working conditions for those workers who are first brought into it. This was the experience of Great Britain, at the beginning of the industrial revolution—an experience which stimulated the work and works of Robert Owen, Charles Kingsley and Charles Dickens, to mention but three. It was the experience of the United States as well, in the early days of the textile trade and of coal mining. So it is not unnatural that the beginnings of industrialisation should bring exceedingly bad labour conditions to these Latin American countries.

The importance of this motive in the establishment of labour codes is shown by the case of Chile, where ex-President Arturo Alessandri, who was chiefly responsible for the Labour Code in that country even before there was much industry there, said that his principle motive in pushing through the Labour Code proposal was to correct a ferociously one-sided situation then existing in employer-worker relations. President Alessandri was deeply influenced by the Charter of the International Labour Organisation, and it was in a large degree the desire to live up to this document and subsequent conventions of the ILO which inspired the Chilean Labour Code.

The second motive for the establishment of labour codes in Latin America was the desire on the part of the Governments to control the labour movements of their countries. The Codes generally provide for minute regulation of the affairs of the unions such as is virtually unknown in Europe and North America except in fascist or communist controlled countries. In Chile the Labour Code states that all unions must be recognised by the Government. In order to gain Government recognition the unions must meet certain requirements. They must have not less than twenty-five members, they must be organised in a meeting at which a Government inspector of labour is present and bears official witness to the act of constitution. The minutes of this first meeting, with the provisional list of officers, must be submitted to the scrutiny of the Government. Qualifications for the officers of unions are established: minimum age, number of years in the company, complete lack of any criminal record.

Once recognition is obtained, the minutest activity of the unions is subject to supervision. Meetings for the election of officers must be attended by a Government Inspector of Labour; so must meetings at which a strike vote is taken. The list of newly elected officers must be submitted to the Government, which can throw them out if they in some manner contravene the provisions of the Labour Code. The annual budgets of the unions must be submitted to the Dirección General del Trabajo for the Government's approval, and if there is too much divergence between the proposed budget and the way in which the money is actually spent, the union must ask for permission for this divergence. The use of union funds for certain things is forbidden: the employment of full-time union officials, political activity, and the investment of union funds in such things as cooperatives, union headquarters and building projects, are subject to strict supervision.

In most labour codes of Latin America a detailed procedure is provided for the settlement of collective disputes. In most cases there are procedures for conciliation and arbitration, and usually it is mandatory for the two sides to appear before the Government conciliation boards, but is optional whether or not they accept arbitration. "Legal" strikes or lockouts can only be declared under these labour codes if all of the process provided in the codes is gone through. Any walkouts or closings before the completion of these Government procedures is illegal and subject to punitive measures on the part of the Government.

It should be noted that in Chile as in most of the other countries of Latin America, the Labour Code is not fully enforced. For instance, the Government control over the internal affairs of the unions in Chile is much lighter than might be the case under the actual provisions of the law. The enforcement or non-enforcement of the control features of the Labour Codes depends to a large degree on the political situation in the respective countries. When a Government in which the labour parties have much influence is in power, the labour code is likely to be strictly enforced for the employers and less strongly enforced in its provisions for the control of the unions. On the other hand, when a conservative regime comes to power, it usually uses the labour code to the utmost as a weapon for weakening its opponents. Cases of these two contrasting attitudes on the part of Governments towards their labour laws are provided by the Chilean leftist Governments since 1938, on the one hand, and the conservative regime which has been in power in Colombia since the middle of 1946.

This close control of the labour organisations by their Governments through the medium of the labour codes can be exceedingly dangerous to the trade unions. For it can be used as a political weapon. This fact is best brought out in Argentina, where the legal mechanism established by Perón—in a country which previously had had but little formal labour legislation—has been one of the prime methods used by the Government to make the unions subservient to the Government's policies and politics. It is virtually impossible in present-day Argentina for a union which is led by those not in sympathy with the regime to obtain Government recognition. Although the law specifies that the majority union in each industry or profession must be recognised by the Government, a number of instances are well known in which the Peronista Government recognised unions which were very small minority organisations but were Peronista, instead of recognising old-line majority but anti-Peronista organisations. The result is that the anti-Peronista unions have virtually disappeared because it is practically impossible for such a union to function. For instance, it is now necessary for all collective bargaining negotiations to be channelled through the Secretariat of Labour and the Secretariat will, of course, not recognise the right of any union which does not have the so-called "*personeria gremial*" granted by the Government to participate in such negotiations.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the labour movements of Latin America are of increasing importance in the life of the twenty republics of that part of the world. During the last decade or more they have experienced an astoundingly rapid growth in size and importance. They are one of the most important expressions of a continent-wide awakening of "backward" peoples and "oppressed" classes there, which unrest is the most important factor in the social and political picture of that part of the New World.

The labour movements of Latin America are political in their leadership and policies. They are almost all controlled by politicians of one or another camp, five such groups being most important: Socialist, Communist, Peronista, Aprista and Catholic, though in the past the anarchists and syndicalists played a very important role. This political control of the labour movements has in some ways aided their development through favourable treatment from sympathetic governments, labour codes defending the rights of the workers and other means. On the other hand, the political influences in the labour movements of Latin America have tended to split the trade unions, and the labour codes themselves have imposed definite restrictions on the unions.

The labour unions of the New World have had several continental organisations, ranging from the "anti-political" anarcho-syndicalist A C A T to the comparatively conservative Pan American Federation of Labour. At the present time the *Confederación de Trabajadores de America Latina* is the principal international labour group. Having originated as a real united front of the labour movements of the continent, it has in recent years become a spokesman for the Communists, and is now under a great deal of pressure both from within and without, from anti-Communist elements.

With nearly four million organised workers in Latin America, the trade union movement of that part of the world is bound to play an increasingly larger part in the affairs not only of its own region, but of the international labour movement as well. It is time that the democratic workers' organisations of the other parts of the world, and particularly of Europe, paid more attention to the labour movements of Latin America.

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